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SUBJECT: REFUGEES FROM GEORGIA-RUSSIA CONFLICT WELL

PROVIDED FOR IN ARMENIA

**¶1.** Post has assiduously followed the situation of refugees who fled Georgia into Armenia as a result of the Russian-Georgian conflict. UNHCR reports that about 5,000 non-Armenian citizens crossed into Armenia as a result of the conflict. UNHCR estimates that about 60 percent of those individuals are of Armenian heritage/ethnicity, with many holding Georgian or Russian citizenship and passports. A sizeable majority of ethnic-Armenian refugees who fled into Armenia from Georgia have a pre-existing support network in the form of relatives or friends willing to house them. There is also a population of Georgians, predominantly from Gori and South Ossetia, who have successfully found temporary lodging in hotels. UNHCR is not/not currently providing any emergency services to refugees from Georgia, for lack of demand. UNHCR hastens to point out, however, that many refugees are poorly prepared for an extended stay. Hotel costs can quickly mount and many packed few belongings in their haste to leave Georgia. Thus, UNHCR predicts that, should instability in Georgia be protracted, a refugee population in need of more active help may well emerge. Two Georgian families have reportedly applied for formal refugee/protection status, and those cases are being processed.

**¶2.** A conoff who spent both August 11 and 13 at the main Bagratashen border crossing reports that the inflow of people from Georgia to Armenia has slowed to almost nil, while there is brisk traffic crossing back northward into Georgia.

Lufthansa and BMI airlines are reportedly adding some flights from Yerevan to Western Europe, while Armavia is reportedly mulling additional flights to Moscow and the North Caucasus to meet increased demand. These factors may soon alleviate the acute crunch in Yerevan hotel availability, presuming that the security situation in Georgia continues to improve.

**¶3.** The Migration Agency director informed emboffs August 12 that his agency is providing some services to the relatively few conflict refugees who arrived without lodging or means of support. He also reported that a problem that briefly arose about persons arriving at the Armenian border without travel documents had been solved, at his order, with an administrative procedure to enable the refugees to enter without passports on an emergency basis.

PENNINGTON